

Online network connects honeybee keepers and researchers

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Grand Valley has two apiaries. Pictured is an apiary at the Meijer Campus in Holland, Mich. Credit: Elizabeth Lienau

One out of three bites of food, or one-third of our diet, is linked to the direct work of the honeybee. But honeybees are mysteriously disappearing, and faculty members at Grand Valley State University are using technology to understand why.

Professors and students are building a Web application that has the potential to connect honeybee keepers with researchers across the country. The keepers register a hive, assign it to a scale and track daily cycles such as weight, humidity and temperature. The data collected can become a [research tool](#) for scientists to discover patterns that could shed light on the problem.

Anne Marie Fauvel, professor of liberal studies, said the number of [honeybees](#) that survive the winter is low every year. "This is serious because the bees that survive are the ones that continue a colony or establish new ones in the spring," she said. "Last year, 36 percent were lost. Twenty years ago, it was only 8 percent."

Fauvel and Jonathan Engelsma, professor of computing, received a \$22,140 grant from Bee Informed Partnership that will provide the support to complete and launch the Web application. BIP is a national project that aims to decrease winter mortality of managed honeybee colonies by helping beekeepers keep colonies alive through surveys and data collection.

Their goal is for the Web application to become a nationwide effort.

More information: Read more about the project in the spring issue of Grand Valley Magazine: gvsu.edu/s/E9

Provided by Grand Valley State University

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